

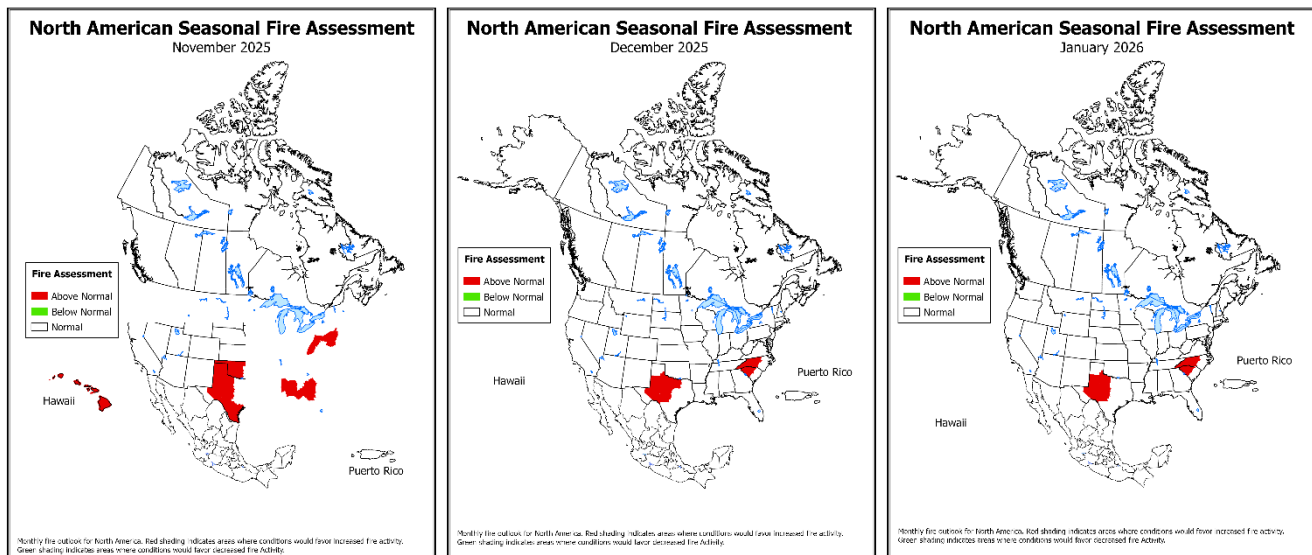
# North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook

National Interagency Fire Center • Natural Resources Canada • Servicio Meteorológico Nacional  
United States Canada Mexico

Outlook Period November 2025 through January 2026  
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## Executive Summary

Generally warmer than normal conditions occurred across Canada during early autumn. A La Niña-like weather pattern continued for most of October, with variable and fast-moving waves moving in from the Pacific, keeping temperatures close to normal over most of British Columbia. In central and eastern Canada, a rather weak polar vortex allowed for periods of both warm and cool weather. The prairies were generally warm during October, with temperatures in the 20s C extending into the last week of the month; however, Hendrickson Creek, Alberta hit an overnight low of -21.8 C over Thanksgiving weekend. Early October was characterized by record breaking maximums in much of eastern Canada from Ontario to the Atlantic coast, where numerous temperatures near or over 30 C occurred, including 31.1 C at Kouchibouguac, New Brunswick. Many stations in Labrador recorded their warmest October monthly average temperature on record. Warm conditions also were recorded further north: Kuujuaq in northern Quebec had 12 days above 10 C, where they typically have 1.8 of these days in October. Other parts of the Arctic recorded their warmest October on record.



Monthly fire outlook for North America for November 2025 (left), December 2025 (middle), and January 2026 (right). Red shading indicates areas where conditions would favor increased fire activity. Green shading indicates areas where conditions would favor decreased fire activity. [Click on each image to see larger versions.](#)

Precipitation across Canada was variable in October. The Madden-Julian Oscillation was active for most of the month and played a role in bringing moisture to the Pacific coast that culminated with heavy snowfall in the higher mountain ranges, but this left some leeward areas and the prairie provinces dry for extended periods. Indeed, British Columbia saw plentiful rain along the coast, though the central interior and northeast received less than 50% of their October normal precipitation, down to just 20% at Kamloops. On the prairies, a band of above normal precipitation amounts extended from southeastern Manitoba northwestward into northeastern Alberta. Winnipeg received 246% of its monthly precipitation total, and Fort McMurray, Alberta, 226%. Northern Manitoba had a significant snowfall, with Snow Lake

receiving 35 cm and Nishichawayasihk Cree Nation 30cm. In west-central Yukon, much of the region received 150-300% of normal precipitation, and high totals were recorded over the Mackenzie mountains (125-225% of normal). Outside these bands, conditions were generally dry; for example, Medicine Hat, Alberta received 23% of its normal October precipitation. In northwest Ontario, Kenora received 155 mm of rain (231% of its monthly average). The Ottawa Valley received more than its normal October precipitation, with 58mm in a one-day event. Further east into Atlantic Canada, the polar vortex continued to steer the bulk of precipitation away from the region in the first half of the month. Conditions were generally dry from Quebec to the Atlantic coast. Val-d'Or received only 33mm of rain (compared to their typical 82mm). Regions in Quebec with near-normal precipitation received this in two events during the third week of October. Despite several low-pressure systems impacting Atlantic Canada in toward the end of the month, southwest Newfoundland received less than half of normal precipitation for October. To the north, October's precipitation fell more as rain than snow. Only trace amounts of snow fell in areas such as Kuujuaq, which normally has about 20 cm by the end of October. A similar trend was noted in Labrador.

Lightning trends during October in Atlantic Canada continued to be interesting. New Brunswick set a new record for the fewest number of cloud-to-ground strokes for October, and Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island had their 2nd and 4th lowest numbers on record. Conversely Newfoundland set a new record for the greatest cloud-to-ground flashes tallied in October.

Across the US, fire activity decreased through October and remained at seasonably low levels nationally into early November. However, periods of slightly increased activity occurred in Southern Area, Southwest, and portions of the Eastern Area, which is typical for fall. October precipitation was above normal across most of the West, with more than 200% of normal precipitation in portions of California and Arizona. Precipitation was mostly below normal across the Plains, with less than 25% of normal rainfall in South Texas. Portions of the Lower Mississippi and Ohio Valleys had above normal rain for October, but precipitation was below normal for much of the Mid-Atlantic, Northeast, and Upper Mississippi Valley. Overall drought changed little with over 43% of the country in drought. Temperatures were above normal across much of the Plains and Mississippi Valley, but near to below normal in the West and much of the East Coast, with the coolest anomalies found in California.

Climate Prediction Center and Predictive Services outlooks issued in late October forecast temperatures that are likely to be above normal across the southern half of the US and most of the East Coast. Temperatures are likely to be near to below normal from the Northwest into the northern Plains and Upper Great Lakes. Precipitation is expected to trend below normal for the southern tier of the US, with the greatest chance of below normal precipitation in the Southeast. Precipitation is likely to be above normal for the northwestern US into the northern Plains, Great Lakes, and Ohio Valley into the winter. Most of the US is forecast to have seasonably low significant fire potential for the outlook period. However, above normal potential is forecast for portions of the central Appalachians, Mid-Atlantic, northeast Gulf Coast, and much of the southern Plains in November, decreasing to portions of Texas and the Carolinas for December and January.

Current wildfire activity across Mexico remains minimal and is forecast to continue at this level through December. This is due to current soil moisture controlling hydrological, ecological, and meteorological processes, which are expected to shift gradually. Mexico's wildfire season typically begins in January, but with minimal activity.

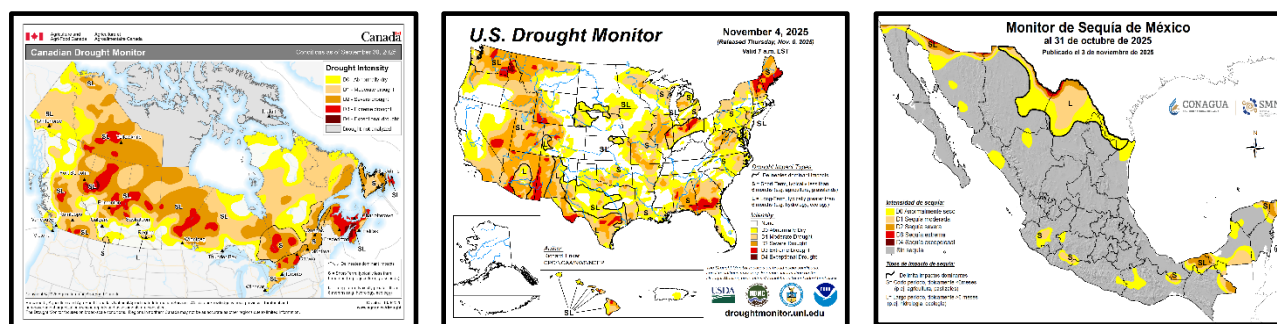
Recent weather patterns have had mixed effects on drought conditions across Mexico, but mostly improved drought. Average temperatures remained above normal during the August to October period. Precipitation was below average in August but exceeded normal levels in September and October. These mixed conditions led to a nationwide decrease in drought. Despite the recent improvement in drought conditions, Mexico experienced another active wildfire season, with over 1.19 million hectares burned so far this year.

## Critical Factors

The critical factors influencing significant fire potential for this outlook period are global climate patterns related to sea surface temperatures, particularly in the Pacific Ocean, and large scale, longer-term soil moisture deficits:

### El Niño-Southern Oscillation and Other Climatic Teleconnections:

The El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) has trended toward La Niña in October, with the Climate Prediction Center declaring a La Niña Advisory October 9. Sea surface temperatures now average more than 0.5 C below average across the central equatorial Pacific Ocean, indicating that La Niña has developed. CPC forecasts a weak La Niña to persist through the end of the year, with a 55% chance of a transition to ENSO neutral conditions early next year. A strong negative phase of the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) persists, with a slight intensification observed in October. The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) became active in October in the Indian Ocean, progressing into Indonesia at the end of the month. Most models are forecasting the MJO to remain active in November as it moves east into the western Pacific and western hemisphere. The weak La Niña and the negative PDO will be the main drivers of this outlook, with some modulation of the pattern likely in November due to the active phase of the MJO.



Left: [Canadian Drought Monitor](#) from Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Middle: [United States Drought Monitor](#). Right: [Mexican Drought Monitor](#) from CONAGUA-Servicio Meteorológico Nacional.

## Drought:

As of October 31, 84% of Canada was characterized as abnormally dry or in moderate to exceptional drought, a slight reduction over the September 30 statistic. Some parts of Canada received enough October precipitation to reduce drought intensity or eliminate it. A section of north-central Alberta and northwestern Saskatchewan is now drought-free. Other drought-free areas include coastal British Columbia, a small patch of north-central British Columbia, an area winding through southern Saskatchewan and Manitoba, a small patch in Ontario on the west side of James Bay, and a few parts of central and northern Quebec. Drought intensity has been reduced in southwestern British Columbia, northeastern Alberta, southern Manitoba, southeastern Ontario and southwestern Quebec along the USA border, and southeastern New Brunswick, where exceptional drought improved by one class to extreme drought.

Drought inception or increase in severity has occurred in British Columbia's central interior, west central and southern Alberta and southwestern Saskatchewan, southeastern Quebec, and Newfoundland. A patch of exceptional drought straddles the central British Columbia/Alberta border, with another further northeast in Alberta's Peace River region. Another patch of exceptional drought in Nova Scotia lies east and north of the Bay of Fundy. Areas of extreme drought are still scattered through each province and territory except possibly Nunavut, where drought is currently not assessed.

Precipitation across the US in October was above normal across most of the West except for portions of the Mojave Desert, eastern Oregon, and north-central Montana, which were below normal. Precipitation 200-400% of normal was observed across portions of central California, Arizona, southwest Colorado, and northwest Utah. Above normal precipitation was also observed in eastern Montana to far northwest Minnesota, as well as portions of the Lower Mississippi, Ohio, and Tennessee

Valleys. Above normal rainfall also occurred in eastern South Carolina and along the Florida Atlantic Coast. Below normal precipitation was observed across much of the Plains except North Dakota, with portions of South Texas receiving less than 10% of normal October rainfall. Below normal precipitation was also observed in much of the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast, but anomalies were much smaller than those observed over the summer. The Great Lakes also were drier than normal for October except for southern Lower Michigan, which was near normal.

Overall drought changed little across the US with nearly 44% of the country in drought as of November 4, a slight decrease from early October's 45%. Drought improved from the Ohio Valley into the Northeast, although portions of New England saw drought intensify. Drought also improved across portions of the West during October, with the most significant improvement noted in the Northwest, portions of the Rockies, and central and southern California. Drought development was noted in portions of the southern Plains and Midwest. Areas of extreme drought persist in most western US states except California and cover less than half the area compared to early October. Extreme drought also covers portions of northern New England, northwest Ohio, northern Indiana, east-central Illinois, South Texas, western Alabama, South Georgia, and the Florida panhandle. A small area of exceptional drought persists in the Idaho panhandle.

In the first half of October, above average rainfall was recorded in areas of the northwest, north, northeast, center, east, and south of Mexico, as well as on the Yucatán Peninsula. This significant precipitation was driven by Hurricane Priscilla and Tropical Storm Raymond near the Mexican Pacific coast, as well as low-pressure area in the Gulf of Mexico, the passage of three tropical over the south, and the passage of three cold fronts in the north of Mexico. Conversely, precipitation deficits were recorded in the northeastern and large parts of northern Mexico, which resulted in a slight increase in abnormally dry and moderate to severe drought conditions in those areas.

### **Fire Season Status:**

As is typical for the time of year, the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre suspended its Situation Report at the end of September, and most of the fire activity nationwide has diminished with the onset of snowfall in northern parts of the country and at higher elevations, as well as an increase in low-pressure activity in a fall-like weather pattern. In northeast British Columbia, southern Northwest Territories, and extreme northern Alberta some fires periodically have burned on warmer, windier days throughout October and into early November. As temperatures continue to drop, snow will begin to accumulate in these regions and put an end to this fire activity. Many hotspots can be observed across the prairies as of early November; however, these are associated with agricultural burning. Conditions are such that burning at small scales can be conducted safely, and these hotspots will continue to show up during the first half of November, or until enough snow accumulates to make burning difficult. Autumn rains have helped to put an end to the fires in Atlantic Canada and will continue to mitigate fire activity there.

The year-to-date total area burned in Canada did not change appreciably in October and remains at approximately 8.3 million hectares, over double the annual average from the past decade. Approximately two hundred fires remain active as of November 5. Only seven are classified as out-of-control, centered in northern Alberta and southern Northwest Territories. Additionally, one fire remains classified as out-of-control in New Brunswick.

In the US, fire activity decreased across the US through October to seasonably low levels. However, periods of slightly increased activity occurred in the Southwest, Southern, and Eastern Areas, typical of fall. The most significant fire event occurred November 5-6 in West Virginia and Virginia, where three new large fires emerged due to dry downslope winds. The National Preparedness Level decreased to one (on a scale of 1-5) October 10 due to the reduction in activity nationally. Total acres burned through November 8 is below the 10-year average at nearly 70%, but with an above average tally of wildfires of 113%.

Between January and October, Mexico experienced a significant wildfire season, with a total of 6,821 wildfires recorded across all 32 states. These wildfires affected over 1.19 million hectares. Most of the burned area, 95%, consisted of grass and brush, with the remaining 5% impacting timber. The states with the highest number of wildfires were Jalisco, State of Mexico, Michoacán, Chihuahua, Mexico City, Durango, Puebla, Guerrero, Chiapas, and Morelos. Together, these states accounted for about 73% of the national total. The states with the largest burned areas were Chihuahua, Durango, Sinaloa, Guerrero, Jalisco, Tabasco, Nayarit, Baja California, Sonora, and Michoacán. Collectively, they represented 76% of the total burned area nationwide.

## **Canada Discussion**

**November/December/January:** Agricultural burning will continue into November. While the fire risk will remain low throughout the month, there is the possibility for a grass fire to pop up on warmer, windier days until snow falls over the southern prairie provinces. The November temperature forecast is for above normal temperatures across the country. The greatest anomalies are expected over the Hudson Bay region and northern Quebec. The greatest area of uncertainty is over British Columbia, particularly coastal regions, where the impact of several troughs will result in variable temperatures and abundant precipitation across the province, with a particularly strong signal over the entire coastal region. Additionally, a moist signal is forecast for the northern prairies, southeastern Territories and northern Quebec. Given these signals, there is likely to be significant trough activity impacting the west coast as well as the development of Mackenzie low-pressure systems tracking across the 60°N parallel. Uncertainty is high over Atlantic Canada, where models cannot converge on a solution for a dry or wet month. Early indications are leaning towards a moist signal, where two significant weather systems have already brought rain and snow to the region. The remainder of the month, negative to neutral Arctic Oscillation (AO) and North Atlantic Oscillation (NAO) values present the idea that frontal activity will continue in a wavier jet stream. This supports a wetter than normal November for this region.

Warm temperatures are likely to continue across eastern Canada in December. However, a cooler signal is now present in several of the seasonal models, centered over British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. A longer-term outlook of continued neutral to negative AO and NAO values supports the possibility of arctic air outbreaks. Additionally, the La Niña (forecasted to continue into the new year) may aid in generating a wavier jet stream than is normal. Cold-air outbreaks bring dry air, and December's precipitation forecast for British Columbia is for below normal amounts. Precipitation anomaly maps hint that cold air will sit over British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan for extended periods of time and deter troughs from impacting the British Columbia coast and deviate them further south into the states. This signal is visible in the Pacific northwest and over the Canadian Rockies. Models suggest more precipitation than normal across the southern prairies, and near the Great Lakes in Ontario. Finally, a drier than normal December is forecast for Atlantic Canada, where a broad dry signal indicates less frontal activity than normal for this time of the year and may point to more neutral AO and NAO indices incoming.

The temperature forecast for January is similar to December, though the area of below normal temperatures may extend into Manitoba and northwestern Ontario. Over Quebec and Atlantic Canada, normal to above-normal temperatures are forecast to start the new year, though the signal is weak at this time. January looks to be wetter than normal for much of western Canada. The Pacific coast dry signal shrinks to encompass primarily the Alaska coast, much of British Columbia and western Alberta look wetter than normal. The moist signal also covers the majority of Ontario and southwestern Quebec. Elsewhere, weak precipitation signals hint a near-normal rain or snow conditions for January.

## **United States Discussion**

**November/December/January:** La Niña conditions have developed over the past few weeks and will persist into the winter. Model, Climate Prediction Center, and Predictive Services forecasts for the next three months indicate above normal temperatures are likely across much of the US, especially in the

southwestern US. A trend towards below normal temperatures is forecast this winter for the Northwest into the northern Plains. Precipitation is likely above normal in the northwestern US into the northern Plains and Great Lakes. However, below normal precipitation is likely across much of the southern quarter of the country through January.

Most of the US is forecast to have seasonally low significant fire potential for the outlook period. However, for November, above normal potential is forecast for portions of the central Appalachians, Mid-Atlantic, northeast Gulf Coast, much of the southern Plains, and parts of Hawai'i. In December, above normal potential is forecast for the east slopes of the southern Appalachians into the Piedmont, and across portions of central and West Texas, with above normal potential continuing for most of these areas into the new year.

## **Mexico Discussion**

**November/December/January:** La Niña conditions are present and favored to persist through into the new year, with a transition to ENSO-neutral likely in January-March 2026 (with a 55% of probability) from the Climate Prediction Center.

Based on these factors and current climatological analyses, a warm and dry outlook is anticipated for the next three months. While temperatures and precipitation are expected to remain above and below their respective normal ranges, respectively the occurrence of extreme mitigating events cannot be ruled out. The mixed trend of the Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO), the positive trend of the Pacific North American (PNA) pattern, and La Niña conditions add greater uncertainty to precipitation and temperature forecasts.

According to the International Research Institute's seasonal forecast for the November through January period, below average precipitation is expected in most of the Mexican Republic. Conversely, above average precipitation is expected in parts of Yucatán and Quintana Roo. Precipitation is anticipated to be near average for parts of Jalisco. For parts of Veracruz, Oaxaca, Tabasco, Chiapas, Campeche, Yucatán, Quintana Roo, and Baja California, the forecast shows no clear pattern. Meanwhile, average temperatures are expected to remain above normal across most of Mexico during the same period.

Considering the current temperature and precipitation patterns, the national drought situation, and the climatological outlook, wildfire activity across most of Mexico is expected to remain minimal during through January. This is due to the seasonal decrease of wildfire during this period of the year. The rainy season has finished, and the dry season will continue, but be modulated by winter events. The environmental conditions therefore result in minimal wildfire activity, and no potential areas of above normal activity are expected across Mexico.

## **Additional Information**

Additional and supplemental information for this outlook can be obtained at:

United States:

National Significant Wildland Fire Potential Outlook

[https://www.nifc.gov/nicc-files/predictive/outlooks/monthly\\_seasonal\\_outlook.pdf](https://www.nifc.gov/nicc-files/predictive/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf)

Canada:

Canadian Wildland Fire Information System

<http://cwfis.cfs.nrcan.gc.ca/home>

Mexico:

Servicio Meteorológico Nacional

<https://smn.conagua.gob.mx/es/observando-el-tiempo/monitoreo-atmosferico-ambiental>

## **Outlook Objective**

The North American Seasonal Fire Assessment and Outlook is a general discussion of conditions that will affect the occurrence of wildland fires across Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Wildland fire is a natural part of many ecosystems across North America. This document provides a broad assessment of those factors that will contribute to an increase or decrease of seasonal fire activity. The objective is to assist wildland fire managers prepare for the potential variations in a typical fire season. It is not intended as a prediction of where and when wildland fires will occur nor is it intended to suggest any area is safe from the hazards of wildfire.

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